

R. L. STINE

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BAD DOG

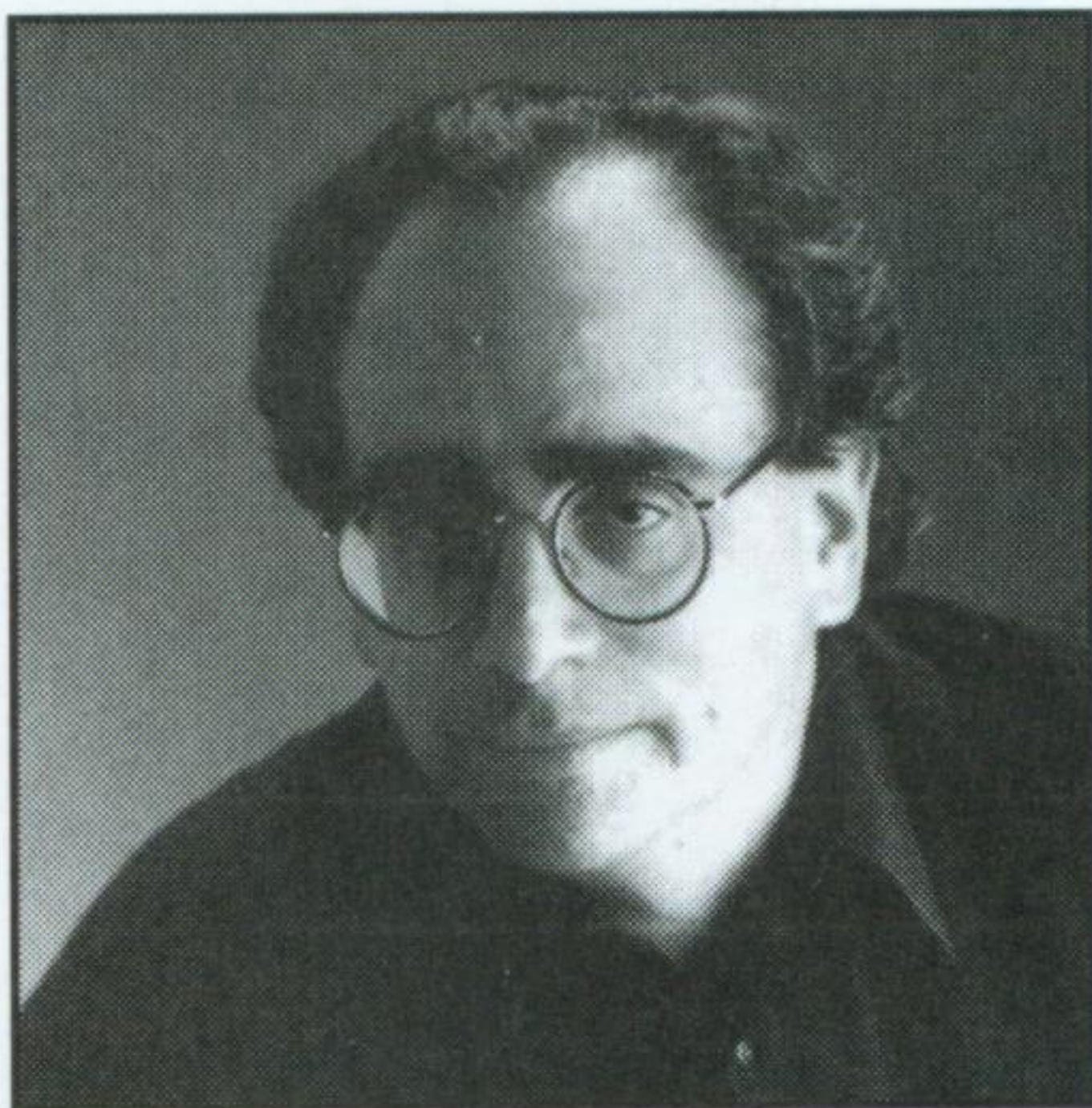
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HAVE A SCARY DAY!
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BAD DOG! by R.L. STINE

A PARACHUTE PRESS BOOK
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created for Pepsi

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My brother, Sean, and I walk through the graveyard every afternoon. That's our shortcut home from school.

It was a cool, crisp day. The wind tossed big brown leaves this way, then that. I liked the crunch they made under my shoes.

"School is so much fun," Sean said, swinging his backpack from one hand to another. "Don't you think so, Cathy?"

I brushed back my long, brown hair and nodded. A lot of kids think school is boring. But Sean and I always look forward to it.

A low growl made me stop walking.

A big, mean-looking dog stepped out from behind a tombstone. The dog lowered its head and growled again. It had mangy yellow fur. One eye was swollen shut. But I could see the other eye clearly. It was a sickly yellow color.

I tried to show the dog I wasn't afraid. "Now where did *you* come from?" I asked, trying to keep my voice steady.

The dog kept its ugly head down as it moved toward us.

"Not friendly, huh?" I said.

Sean tugged my arm. My little brother is very afraid of dogs. "L-let's go," he stammered.

"Go home!" I ordered the dog. "Go home! Go home!"

The dog stood still, glaring up at me with its one good eye.

"Hey—hi!" I called out when I saw Judy and Martin, two kids from school. They stood half-hidden by the graveyard fence. "Is this your dog?" I called.

Judy shook her head. "No way!" she called.

The dog growled and bared its ugly yellow teeth.

"Go home! Go home!" I shouted at it. Sean was terrified. He started to run, and

I followed after him.

"Is he following us?" Sean called breathlessly.

I glanced back. No. The big, ugly creature had disappeared.

Later, Sean and I were doing our homework at the dining room table. "Get down, Fluff," I said softly. "Get down." Our cat loves to climb up on the table. I gave her a gentle shove.

Sean finished his homework first. "I'm going to go out and ride my bike," he announced.

A short while later, I heard him raise the garage door. Then, to my surprise, I heard angry barking.

I jumped up from the table. I heard Sean screaming for help.

I ran out to the garage. "Oh, no!" I cried. The mangy yellow dog had Sean cornered in the back of the garage. Snarling, baring its ugly teeth, the dog arched its back and prepared to attack.

"Help me!" Sean wailed.

"Bad dog!" I cried angrily. I rushed forward and grabbed the dog's collar. Tugging with all my strength, I pulled the big dog from the garage. "Bad dog! Bad dog!" I shouted.

The dog sneered up at me. Then it turned and walked away.

As I watched it, I saw a flash of color behind the hedge in the next yard. It's

Judy and Martin! I realized. What are *they* doing here? I wondered.

"Do you see those two kids—Judy and Martin?" I whispered to Sean. "Why are they watching us?"

"I don't know," Sean replied. He was still trembling. "I don't think I'll ride my bike. I'm going to stay inside."

I put a hand on my brother's shoulder. "The dog is gone," I told him. "He won't come back."

I was wrong.

The next morning was cloudy and gray. Dead leaves clattered down our street like fat brown mice. The air felt damp and cold.

Sean and I were hurrying through the graveyard, making our way to school. We were nearly to the gate when the yellow dog stepped out from behind a tilted gravestone.

“Oh, nooooo,” Sean wailed.

Before I could move out of the way, the dog bumped me hard with its shoulder and head. I jumped back as the creature opened its mouth in an angry growl.

“Bad dog! Bad dog!” I scolded it.

“What does it *want*?” Sean asked shrilly.

The dog turned—and backed Sean up against a large granite tomb. Its yellow eye flashed angrily. It pulled back its lips, revealing its long, splintered teeth.

“Help m-me!” Sean stammered, pressing against the cold tomb.

“Hey—!” Glancing up, I saw Judy and Martin once again. They were huddled together behind the fence, staring at Sean and me.

I cupped my hands around my mouth. “Help us!” I called. “Hey, you two—help us get rid of this dog!”

Judy and Martin didn’t move.

“Please,” I shouted. “Hurry!”

To my surprise, the two kids spun around—and ran away.

“Hey—come back!” I called. “Come back, you two!”

What creeps! I thought angrily. Why didn’t they help?

I felt so angry, I forgot my fear. I grabbed the big dog by the collar. "Come on, dog!" I told it. "Come on. We're going for a *long* walk."

The dog struggled to pull free. But I gripped the collar tightly and dragged the beast through the graveyard gate.

"Cathy—what are you doing?" Sean demanded, following me but keeping his distance.

I put two hands around the collar and dragged the big dog toward the trees. "I'm taking him into the woods," I told Sean.

"But—why?" Sean asked, his eyes on the dog.

"Maybe if we take him far enough

away, he won't come back," I replied.

"You mean, like to a different neighborhood?" Sean asked.

I nodded. And tugged.

The dog didn't want to come with me. He growled and snapped. But I didn't let go of the collar.

He whipped his head hard from side to side. But I grasped the collar tightly and pulled him into the woods. "Bad dog! Bad dog!" I scolded.

Sean followed behind. "Why is this dog following us all the time? Why is it picking on us?"

I didn't answer. I needed all my strength to pull the dog.

I dragged the creature deeper into the

woods. The bare trees rattled in the wind. Dry brown leaves swirled and danced.

I kept thinking about Judy and Martin. What was their problem, anyway? Why did they always seem to be there whenever the ugly dog appeared?

Were they *spying* on Sean and me?

Why didn't they help us when I called to them?

After a while, the dog stopped pulling me. He lowered his head and let me lead him through the woods.

Sean walked behind me, far away. "We're going to be late for school," he murmured unhappily.

"I don't care," I told him. "We want to lose this horrible dog, don't we?"

The woods seemed to stretch on for miles. I knew that the next town started on the other side. I wanted to leave the dog in the next town.

I hoped that maybe, *maybe*, he would stay there forever.

The sky darkened. The air grew even colder and wetter.

Finally, we reached the edge of the woods. Across the street, I could see houses of the next town.

With a sigh of relief, I let go of the dog collar. "Shoo!" I cried. "Get going!"

I tried to give the big dog a hard push to start it on its way.

But it didn't budge. It glared at me angrily with its one good eye and uttered

low growls from deep in its throat.

“Go home! Go home!” Sean cried .

The dog shook its mangy head, as if saying no.

I tried to stare the creature down. But it let out one last growl. Then it turned and loped slowly across the street.

Without saying a word, Sean and I whipped around and bolted back into the woods. We ran as hard as we could, ducking around thick shrubs and tall weeds.

I looked back only once.

And let out a happy cry when I saw that the dog wasn't following us.

Sean and I got to school nearly an hour late. But we didn't care. We were both so happy. We had left the frighten-

ing dog in the next town, far, far away.

That afternoon, we both stayed in school late. We both had science projects to work on. When we finally finished, the school was silent and empty.

We pushed open the front doors and stepped out into the cool, gray afternoon.

At the bottom of the stairs, the dog stood waiting for us.

“No—!” Sean and I both cried out in shock.

The dog leaped up, ready to pounce. It opened its mouth in an ugly growl. Its eye flared angrily. Thick saliva dripped from its jagged teeth.

No time to move. No time to run.

I staggered back. Pressed myself against the cold brick wall of the school building.

The big dog snapped its jaws hungrily. Once. Twice. It growled its rage.

"Dogs always know," a girl's voice said.

"Huh?" Startled, I glanced up to see Judy and Martin standing at the side of the walk.

The dog turned to them too. And uttered another angry growl.

"What did you say?" I called to Judy.

"Dogs always know," she repeated.

"Know *what*?" I demanded angrily.

"Dogs always know when people are afraid of them?"

Judy shook her head. She and Martin both narrowed their eyes at us. "Dogs always know when people are *ghosts*!" she exclaimed.

She and Martin stepped closer. The dog barked furiously.

"You're dead—aren't you!" Martin accused. "You and Sean are both dead!"

"There's no use lying," Judy added. "You're both ghosts. Admit it. The dog knows. Dogs always know!"

"Okay, okay. You're right," I confessed, my voice trembling with sadness. "Sean and I are dead. We're both ghosts."

"Call the dog off—please!" Sean begged them. "We admitted that we're ghosts. Now, please—call the dog off."

"We can't," Martin replied.

"Why not?" I demanded.

"Because we're ghosts too," Judy said. "We *thought* you were ghosts like us. But we weren't sure until now."

The big dog pawed the ground, preparing to attack.

"What are we going to do about him?" Judy asked. "We don't want any living people to find out we're ghosts. They won't let us go to school. And we'll lose all contact with the real world."

Suddenly, I had an idea. "Follow me," I told them.

I leaped down the stairs, dodged around the snarling dog, and started running toward home. Sean, Judy, and

Martin followed me. Growling angrily, the dog came loping behind them.

We cut through the graveyard and kept running till we reached my house. Then I ran inside and picked up Fluff.

I carried the cat outside. And set her down on the grass. "Go get him, Fluff!" I ordered.

Fluff let out a hiss, and charged the big, ugly dog. The dog uttered a startled *yelp*—and took off across the yard.

Watching the frantic chase, the four of us had to laugh.

We knew we'd never see that dog again.

After all, dogs hate ghosts. But they hate *ghost cats* even more!

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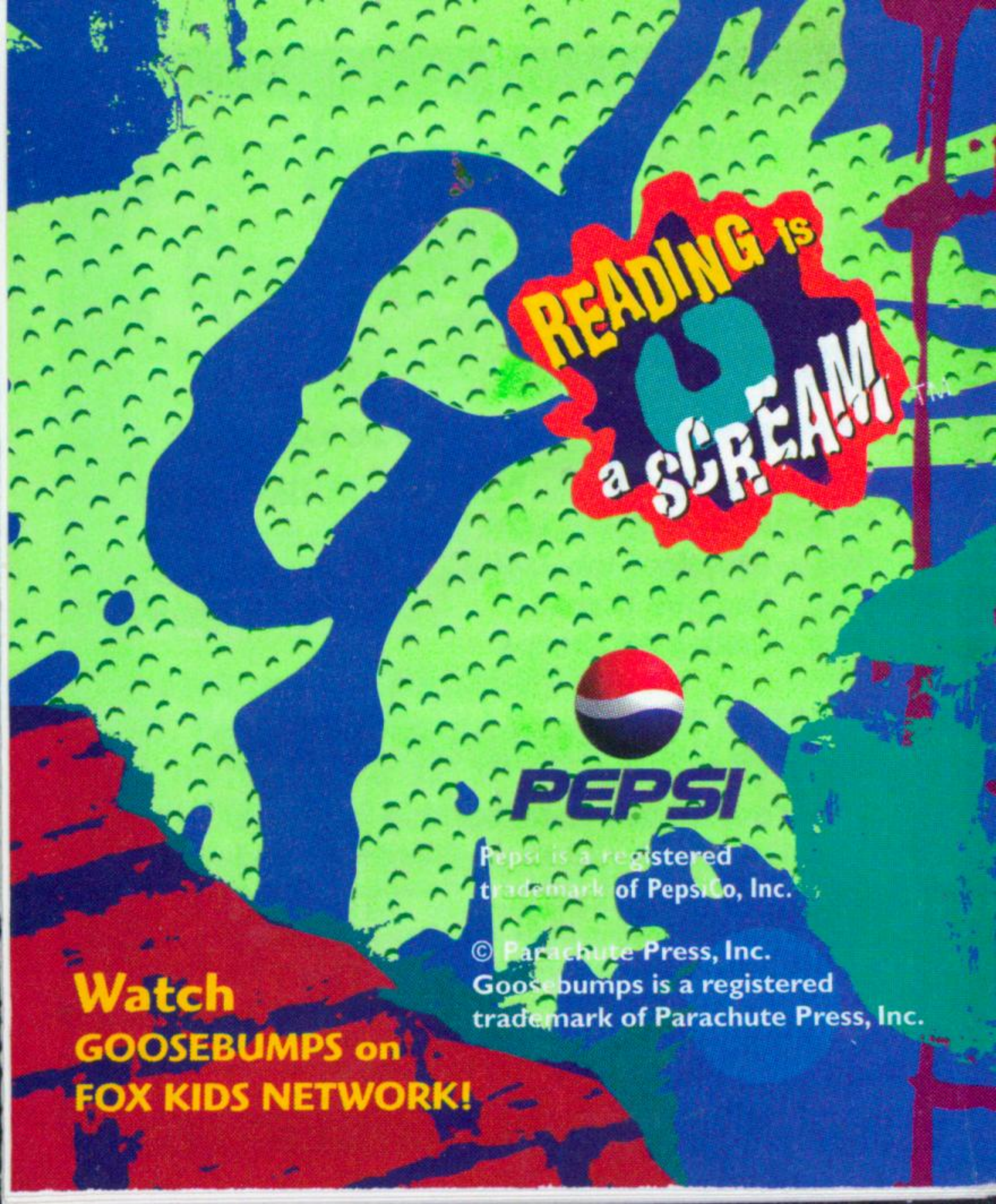
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